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# SERMON ON WAR:

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Convention of Congregational Ministers



DELIVERED AT THE

1862

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BY WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

Minister of the Church of Christ in Federal Street, Boston.

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1862.

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TO

HIS HONOUR, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, the President of the  
Massachusetts Peace Society; to the HON. THOMAS  
DAWES, the Vice President; and to the other Officers  
of that Institution,

GENTLEMEN,

THE approbation with which you have favoured the following discourse deserves my grateful acknowledgments. I am truly happy to submit it to the publick under your patronage. The Society, which has committed to you the direction of its affairs, has my best wishes and fervent prayers. I rejoice, that I have lived to witness its formation. The existence of an institution for the promotion of peace, is an encouraging indication of the improvement of publick opinion, and of the diffusion of the spirit of Christianity. Not many years ago, such an association must have encountered great, if not insuperable obstacles. But HE, whose prerogative it is to bring good from evil, has awakened multitudes of Christians, by the late tremendous calamities of war, to a sense of its guilt and madness. Never before were so many minds directed to the true character, to the undisguised horrors of this barbarous usage. The time, I trust, is coming, when it will be accounted no small honour to have been among the earliest labourers in the work of mitigating and abolishing war.

The cause is God's, and must prevail. The spirit, which you are labouring to diffuse, is Christ's, and it *must* triumph over the spirit and passions of the world. May God grant you the happiness of witnessing, in this your day, the fruits of your labours; of witnessing a new impulse communicated to the Christian world, a new sympathy and cooperation excited in different nations, in favour of peace. But should the seed, which you sow, yield no immediate harvest, you will yet have your reward. The influence of the principles, which you have espoused, though not developed in sudden and conspicuous effects, will be silently and gradually extended, until in an happier age it will break forth and issue in the pacification of the world. There is a satisfaction, known only to the heart which feels it, in cherishing these hopes of the progress of society and Christian truth.

That your Society may receive constant accessions of strength and numbers; that the zeal of its members may bear some proportion to the sublimity and beneficence of its object; that similar institutions may be multiplied in this and in every country; and that their labours, issuing from the spirit of Christ, may be crowned with his favour; is the ardent wish of

Your obedient servant,

Your sincere friend, and

Your fellow labourer in the cause of peace,

**WILLIAM E. CHANNING.**

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## SERMON, &c.

Isaiah, 2d chap. 4th verse. Nation shall not lift up sword  
against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

I HAVE chosen a subject, which may seem at first view not altogether appropriate to the present occasion—the subject of WAR. It may be thought, that an address to an assembly composed chiefly of the ministers of religion, should be confined to the duties, the dangers, and encouragements, which belong to the sacred office. If an apology be necessary for a deviation from the ordinary discussions of this day, I would observe, that the subject, which I have selected, has strong and peculiar claims on Christian ministers. Their past neglect of it is their reproach; and it is time, my brethren, that this reproach were wiped away; that our obligations, as ministers of the Prince of peace, should be better understood and more deeply felt; and that our influence should be combined in illustrating and enforcing the slighted and almost forgotten precepts of Christianity on the subject of war. I have been induced to select this topick, because, after the slumber of ages, Christians seem to be awakening to a sense of the pacifick character of their religion, and because I under-

stood, that this Convention were at this anniversary to consider the interesting question, whether no method could be devised for enlightening the publick mind on the nature and guilt of the custom of war. I was unwilling that this subject should be approached and dismissed as an ordinary affair. I feared, that in the presure of business, we might be satisfied with the expression of customary disapprobation; and that, having in this way relieved our consciences, we should relapse into our former indifference, and should continue to hear the howlings of this dreadful storm of human passions with as much unconcern as before. I wished—perhaps it was a presumptuous wish, perhaps a humbler office would have been more wisely chosen—but I wished to awaken in your breasts a firm and holy purpose, to toil and suffer in the great work of abolishing this worst vestige of barbarism, this grossest outrage on the principles of Christianity.—The day I trust is coming, when Christians will look back with gratitude and affection on those men, who, in ages of conflict and bloodshed, enlisted under the banner of philanthropy and peace, cherished generous hopes of human improvement, withstood the violence of corrupt opinion, held forth, amidst the general darkness, the pure and mild light of christianity, and thus ushered in a new and peaceful era in the history of mankind. My fathers and brethren! In that day of triumph to the church, may it be recorded, that in this

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age of war and crime, there were not wanting those, who looked with mingled indignation, horror and grief, on the woes inflicted by man on his brother; and who never fainted in their toils to infuse the spirit of mercy and peace into their fellow-beings.

The *miseries* and *crimes* of war, its *sources*, its *remedies*, will be the subjects of our present attention.—In detailing its miseries and crimes, there is no temptation to recur to unreal or exaggerated horrors. No strength, no depth of colouring can approach reality. It is lamentable, that we need a delineation of the calamities of war, to rouse us to exertion. The mere idea of human beings employing every power and faculty in the work of mutual destruction, ought at once to strike a horror into our minds. But on this subject, our sensibilities are dreadfully sluggish and dead. Our ordinary sympathies seem to forsake us, when war is named. The sufferings and death of a single fellow-being often excite a tender and active compassion: but we hear without emotion of thousands enduring every variety of woe in war. A single murder in peace thrills through our frames. The countless murders of war are heard as an amusing tale. The execution of a criminal depresses the mind, and philanthropy is labouring to substitute milder punishments for death. But benevolence has hardly made an effort to snatch from sudden and untimely death, the innumerable victims immolated on the altar



of war. This insensibility demands, that the miseries and crimes of war should be often placed before us with minuteness, with energy, with strong and indignant emotion.

The miseries of war may be easily conceived from its very nature. By war, we understand the resort of nations to force, violence, and the most dreaded methods of destruction and devastation. In war, the strength, skill, courage, energy, and resources of a whole people are concentrated for the infliction of pain and death. The bowels of the earth are explored, the most active elements combined, the resources of art and nature exhausted, to increase the power of man in destroying his fellow-creatures.

Would you learn what destruction man, when thus aided, can spread around him? Look at that extensive region, desolate and overspread with ruins; its forests rent and leafless, as if blasted by lightning; its villages prostrated, as by an earthquake; its fields barren, as if swept by storms. Not long ago, the sweet influences of heaven descended on no happier or more fruitful region than this. But ravaging armies prowled over it; war frowned on it; and its fruitfulness and happiness are fled. Here were gathered thousands and ten thousands from distant provinces, not to embrace as brethren, but to renounce the tie of brotherhood; and thousands, in the vigour of life, when least prepared for death,

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Repair, my friends, in thought, to a field of  
recent battle. Here, are heaps of slain, wel-  
tering in their own blood, their bodies mangled,  
their limbs shattered, and in many a form and  
countenance not a vestige left of their former  
selves. Here, are multitudes trodden under  
foot, and the war-horse has left the trace of  
his hoof in many a crushed and mutilated  
frame. Here, are severer sufferers; they  
live, but live without hope or consolation.  
Justice despatches the criminal with a single  
stroke; but the victims of war, falling by casual,  
undirected blows, often expire in lingering  
agony, their deep groans applying in vain to  
compassion, their limbs writhing with pain  
on the earth, their lips parched with a burning  
thirst, their wounds open to the chilling air,  
the memory of tender relatives rushing on  
their minds, but not an accent of friendship or  
comfort reaching their ears. Amidst this  
scene of horrors, you see the bird and beast  
of prey drinking the blood of the dead, and  
with a merciful cruelty ending the struggles  
of the dying: and, still more melancholy! you  
see human plunderers, bereft of all human  
sympathy, turning a deaf ear on the wounded,  
and rifling the warm and almost palpitating  
remains of the slain.—If you extend your eye  
beyond the immediate field of battle, and  
follow the track of the pursuing and victorious  
army, you see the roads strewed with the dead;

you see scattered flocks, and harvests trampled under foot, the smoking ruins of cottages, and the miserable inhabitants flying in want and despair;—and even yet, the horrors of a single battle are not exhausted. Some of the deepest pangs, which it inflicts, are silent, retired, enduring, to be read in the countenance of the widow, in the unprotected orphan, in the aged parent, in affection cherishing the memory of the slain, and weeping that it could not minister to their last pangs.

I have asked you to traverse in thought, a field of battle. There is another scene often presented in war, perhaps more terrible—I refer to a besieged city. The most horrible pages in history are those, which record the reduction of strongly fortified places. In a besieged city, are collected all descriptions and ages of mankind, women, children, the old, the infirm. Day and night the weapons of death and conflagration fly around them. They see the approaches of the foe, the trembling bulwark, and the fainting strength of their defenders. They are worn with famine, and on famine presses pestilence. At length the assault is made, every barrier is broken down, and a lawless soldiery, exasperated by resistance, and burning with lust and cruelty, are scattered through the streets. The domestick retreat, and even the house of God, is no longer a sanctuary. Venerable age is no protection. Female purity no defence. In presence of the dying husband, and

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the murdered child, the wife is spared, not from mercy, but to gratify the basest passion. These are heart-rending scenes, but history abounds with them; and what better fruits can you expect from war?

These views are the most obvious and striking which war presents, and therefore I have given them the first place. But the horrors of war are not yet exhausted. There are more secret influences, which, while they appeal less powerfully to the senses and imagination, will deeply affect a reflecting and benevolent mind.

Consider, first, the condition of those who are immediately engaged in war? The sufferings of soldiers from battle we have seen; but their sufferings are not limited to the period of conflict. The whole of war is a succession of exposures too severe for human nature. Death employs other weapons than the sword. It is computed, that in ordinary wars, greater numbers perish by sickness than in battle. Exhausted by long and rapid marches, by unwholesome food, by exposure to storms, by excessive labour under a burning sky through the day, and by interrupted and restless sleep on the damp ground and under the chilling atmosphere of night, thousands after thousands of the young pine away and die. They anticipated that they should fall, if to fall should be their lot, in what they called the field of honour; but they perish in the inglorious and crowded hospital, sur-



rounded with sights and sounds of wo, far from home and every friend, and denied those tender offices which sickness and expiring nature require.

But do not stop here. Consider the influence of war on the *character* of these unhappy men. Their trade is butchery—their business destruction. They hire themselves for slaughter, place themselves servile instruments, passive machines, in the hands of unprincipled rulers, to execute the bloodiest mandates, without reflection, without mercy, without a thought on the justice of the cause in which they are engaged. What a school is this for the human character? From men trained in battle to ferocity and carnage, accustomed to the perpetration of cruel deeds, accustomed to take human life without sorrow or remorse, habituated to esteem an unthinking courage a substitute for every virtue, encouraged by plunder to prodigality, taught improvidence by perpetual hazard and exposure, restrained only by an iron discipline which is withdrawn in peace, and unfitted by the restless and irregular career of war for the calm and uniform pursuits of ordinary life; from such men, what can be expected but hardness of heart, profligacy of life, contempt of the restraints of society, and of the authority of God? From the nature of his calling, the soldier is almost driven to sport with the thought of death, to defy and deride it, and of course, to banish the thought of that judgment to which it leads; and though of all men the most exposed to

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unprepared to appear before the bar of God.

The influence of war on the community at  
large, on its prosperity, its morals, and its po-  
litical institutions, though less striking than on  
the soldiery, is yet most baleful.—How often is  
a community impoverished to sustain a war in  
which it has no interest. Publick burdens are  
aggravated, whilst the means of sustaining  
them are reduced. Internal improvements  
are neglected. The revenue of the state is ex-  
hausted in military establishments, or flows  
through secret channels into the coffers of  
corrupt men, whom war exalts to power and  
office. The regular employments of peace  
are disturbed. Industry in many of its  
branches is suspended. The labourer, ground  
with want, and driven to despair by the cla-  
mour of his suffering family, becomes a soldier  
in a cause which he condemns, and thus the  
country is drained of its most effective popula-  
tion. The people are stripped and reduced,  
whilst the authors of war retrench not a com-  
fort, and often fatten on the spoils and woes of  
their country.

But the influence of war on the *morals* of  
society is still more fatal. The suspension of  
industry and the pressure of want multiply  
vice. Criminal modes of subsistence are the  
resource of the suffering. Publick and pri-  
vate credit are shaken. Distrust and fear  
take place of mutual confidence. Commerce  
becomes a system of stratagem and collusion;

and the principles of justice receive a shock which many years of peace are not able to repair.

In war, the moral sentiments of a community are perverted by that admiration of military exploits, to which every people is inclined, and which is studiously cherished by those who have an interest in prolonging the contest. Every eye is fixed on the conqueror, and every tongue busy with his deeds. The milder virtues of Christianity are eclipsed by the baleful lustre thrown round a ferocious courage. The disinterested, the benignant, the merciful, the forgiving, those whom Jesus has pronounced blest and honourable, must give place to the hero, whose character is stained not only with blood, but sometimes with the foulest vices; but all whose stains are washed away by victory.

Once more. War diffuses through a community unfriendly and malignant passions. Nations, exasperated by mutual injuries, burn for each others humiliation and ruin. They delight to hear that famine, pestilence, want, defeat, and the most dreadful scourges which providence sends on a guilty world, are desolating a hostile community. The slaughter of thousands of fellow-beings, instead of awaking pity, flushes them with delirious joy, illuminates the city, and dissolves the whole country in revelry and riot. Thus the heart of man is hardened. His worst passions are nourished. He renounces the bonds and sym-

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pathies of humanity. Were the prayers, or rather the curses of warring nations prevalent in heaven, the whole earth would long since have become a desert. The human race, with all their labours and improvements, would have perished under the sentence of universal extermination.

But war not only assails the prosperity and morals of a community; its influence on the political condition is alarming. It arms government with a dangerous patronage, multiplies dependants and instruments of oppression, and generates a power, which, in the hands of the energetick and aspiring, can hardly fail to prostrate a free constitution. War organizes a body of men, who lose the feelings of the citizen in the soldier; whose habits detach them from the community; whose ruling passion is devotion to a chief; who are inured in the camp to despotick sway; who are accustomed to accomplish their ends by force, and to sport with the rights and happiness of their fellow-beings; who delight in tumult, adventure, and peril; and turn with disgust and scorn from the quiet labours of peace. Is it wonderful, that such protectors of a state should look with contempt on the weakness of the protected, and should lend themselves base instruments to the subversion of that freedom which they do not themselves enjoy?—In a community, in which precedence is given to the military profession, freedom cannot long endure. The encroachments of

power at home are expiated by foreign triumphs. The essential interests and rights of the state are sacrificed to a false and fatal glory. Its intelligence and vigour, instead of presenting a bulwark to domestick usurpation, are expended in military achievements. Its most active and aspiring citizens rush to the army, and become subservient to the power which dispenses honour. The nation is victorious, but the recompense of its toils is a yoke as galling as that which it imposes on other communities.

Thus, war is to be ranked among the most dreadful calamities which fall on a guilty world; and, what deserves consideration, and gives to war a dreadful pre-eminence among the sources of human misery, it tends to multiply and perpetuate itself without end. It feeds and grows on the blood which it sheds. The passions, from which it springs, gain strength and fury from indulgence. The successful nation, flushed by victory, pants for new laurels; whilst the humbled nation, irritated by defeat, is impatient to redeem its honour and repair its losses. Peace becomes a truce, a feverish repose, a respite to sharpen anew the sword, and to prepare for future struggles. Under professions of friendship, lurk hatred and distrust; and a spark suffices to renew the mighty conflagration. When from these causes, large military establishments are formed, and a military spirit kindled, war becomes a necessary part of policy. A



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foreign field must be found for the energies and passions of a martial people. To disband a numerous and veteran soldiery, would be to let loose a dangerous horde on society. The blood-hounds must be sent forth on other communities, lest they rend the bosom of their own country. Thus war extends and multiplies itself. No sooner is one storm scattered, than the sky is darkened with the gathering horrors of another. Accordingly, war has been the mournful legacy of every generation to that which succeeds it. Every age has had its conflicts. Every country has in turn been the seat of devastation and slaughter. The dearest interests and rights of every nation have been again and again committed to the hazards of a game, of all others the most uncertain, and in which, from its very nature, success too often attends on the fiercest courage and the basest fraud.

Such, my friends, is an unexaggerated, and I will add, a faint delineation of the miseries of war; and to all these miseries and crimes the human race have been continually exposed, for no worthier cause, than to enlarge an empire already tottering under its unwieldy weight, to extend an iron despotism, to support some idle pretension, to repel some unreal or exaggerated injury. For no worthier cause, human blood has been poured out as water, and millions of rational and immortal beings have been driven like sheep to the field of slaughter.

Ministers of the Prince of peace! sent to your fellow-beings with a message of love, sent to breathe the spirit of charity and kind affection around you! can you look without aching hearts on the scenes which have been portrayed, on men, on brethren, on children of one father, on disciples of the same Lord, studying the arts of mutual destruction, plunging the sword into each others breasts, and exerting in the work of desolation and death those exalted powers, which ally them with angels and with God; and which, under the guidance of benevolence, would change the world into a paradise? Is it not your duty to employ every faculty, every legitimate means of influence, for the abolition of war?

But how, it will be said, can we contribute to the abolition of war? Has not war its origin in the ambition of princes? and how shall we obtain an influence over courts and cabinets, and sway the minds of those, whose power and station almost place them beyond the reach of instruction?—It is indeed true, that the ambition of rulers is a frequent cause of war. The desire of building up their power at home, or of extending their empire abroad; of surpassing other sovereigns, their natural and only rivals; of signalizing their administration by brilliant deeds; and of attracting louder applause than ordinarily attends on pacifick virtues; this aspiring principle has in all ages thrown the world into tumult. But the ambition of rulers does not lie at the root

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of war. We must remember, that ambition is directed and inflamed by publick opinion. Were there not a propensity in the mass of men, to give honour to warlike triumphs, rulers would never seek distinction in this bloody career. The deepest and most operative causes of war are to be found in the universal principles of human nature, in passions which sway all classes of men; and therefore, religious instructors, whose office it is to operate on the human heart, and to purify its principles, may do more than any other men to counteract the causes of war.

To assist us in this work, let us inquire into the passions and principles which generate war;—and here, I doubt not, many will imagine that the first place ought to be given to malignity and hatred. But justice to human nature requires, that we ascribe to national animosities a more limited operation, than is usually ascribed to them, in the production of this calamity. It is indeed, true, that ambitious men, who have an interest in war, too often accomplish their views by appealing to the malignant feelings of a community, by exaggerating its wrongs, ridiculing its forbearance, and reviving ancient jealousies and resentments. But it is believed, that were not malignity and revenge aided by the concurrence of higher principles, the false splendour of this barbarous custom might easily be obscured, and its ravages stayed.

One of the great springs of war may be found in a very strong and general propensity of human nature;—in the love of excitement, of emotion, of strong interest—a propensity which gives a charm to those bold and hazardous enterprizes which call forth all the energies of our nature. No state of mind, not even positive suffering, is more painful than the want of interesting objects. The vacant heart preys on itself, and often rushes with impatience from the security which demands no effort, to the brink of peril. This part of human nature is seen in the kind of pleasures which have always been preferred. Why has the first rank among sports been given to the chace? Because its difficulties, hardships, hazards, tumults, awaken the mind, and give to it a new consciousness of existence, and a deep feeling of its powers. What is the charm which attaches the statesman to an office which almost weighs him down with labour and an appalling responsibility? He finds much of his compensation in the powerful emotion and interest, awakened by the very hardships of his lot, by conflict with vigorous minds, by the opposition of rivals, and by the alternations of success and defeat. What hurries to the gaming-table the man of prosperous fortune and ample resource? The dread of apathy, the love of strong feeling and of mental agitation. A deeper interest is felt in hazarding, than in securing wealth, and the temptation is irresistible. One more example

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of this propensity may be seen in the attachment of pirates and highway-men to their dreadful employment. Its excess of peril has given it a terrible interest; and to a man who has long conversed with its dangers, the ordinary pursuits of life are vapid, tasteless, and disgusting. We have here one spring of war. War is of all games the deepest, awakening most powerfully the soul, and, of course, presenting powerful attraction to those restless and adventurous minds, which pant for scenes of greater experiment and exposure than peace affords. The savage, finding in his uncultivated modes of life few objects of interest, few sources of emotion, burns for war as a field for his restless energy. The sovereign, bred as he is in indulgence, satiated with luxury, and secluded from pursuits which furnish materials of interest to the great mass of his subjects, is often the victim of weariness and discontent, and stakes his crown, that he may feel the agitations of hazard, of peril, and of great events. The whole mass of a community also find a pleasure in war, as an excitement of the mind. They follow, with an eager concern, the movements of armies, and wait the issue of battles with a deep suspense, an alternation of hope and fear, inconceivably more interesting than the unvaried uniformity of peaceful pursuits.

Another powerful principle of our nature, which is the spring of war, is the passion for superiority, for triumph, for power. The



human mind is strongly marked by this feature. It is aspiring, impatient of inferiority, and eager of pre-eminence and control. I need not enlarge on the predominance of this passion in rulers, whose love of power is influenced by the possession, and who are ever restless to extend their sway. It is more important to observe, that were this desire restrained to the breasts of rulers, war would move with a sluggish pace. But the passion for power and superiority is universal; and as every individual, from his intimate union with the community, is accustomed to appropriate its triumphs to himself, there is a general promptness to engage in any contest, by which the community may obtain an ascendancy over other nations.—The desire, that our country should surpass all others, would not be criminal, did we understand in what respects it is most honourable for a nation to excel; did we feel, that the glory of a state consists in intellectual and moral superiority, in pre-eminence of knowledge, freedom and purity. But to the mass of a people, this form of pre-eminence is too refined and un-substantial. There is another kind of triumph which they better understand, the triumph of physical power, triumph in battle, triumph, not over the minds, but the territory of another state. Here is a palpable, visible superiority; and for this, a people are willing to submit to severe privations. A victory blots out the memory of their sufferings, and in boasting of their extended

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power, they find a compensation for many woes.

I now proceed to another powerful spring of war, and it is the admiration of the brilliant qualities which are often displayed in war. These qualities, more than all things, have prevented an impression of the crimes and miseries of this savage custom. Many delight in war, not for its carnage and woes, but for its valour and apparent magnanimity, for the self-command of the hero, the fortitude which despises suffering, the resolution which courts danger, the superiority of the mind to the body, to sensation, to fear. Let us be just to human nature even in its errors and excesses. Men seldom delight in war, considered merely as a source of misery. When they hear of battles, the picture which rises to their view is not what it should be, a picture of extreme wretchedness, of the wounded, the mangled, the slain. These horrors are hidden under the splendour of those mighty energies, which break forth amidst the perils of conflict, and which human nature contemplates with an intense and heart-thrilling delight. Attention hurries from the heaps of the slaughtered to the victorious chief, whose single mind pervades and animates a host, and directs with stern composure the storm of battle; and the ruin which he spreads is forgotten in admiration of his power. This admiration has, in all ages, been expressed by the most unequivocal signs. Why that garland woven? that arch

erected? that festive board spread? These are tributes to the Warriour. Whilst the peaceful sovereign, who scatters blessings with the silence and constancy of Providence, is received with a faint applause, men assemble in crowds to hail the conqueror, perhaps a monster in human form, whose private life is blackened with lust and crime, and whose greatness is built on perfidy and usurpation. Thus war is the surest and speediest road to renown; and war will never cease, while the field of battle is the field of glory, and the most luxuriant laurels grow from a root nourished with blood.

Another cause of war is a false patriotism. It is a natural and a generous impulse of nature to love the country, which gave us birth, by whose institutions we have been moulded, by whose laws defended, and with whose soil and scenery innumerable associations of early years, of domestick affection, and of friendship, have been formed. But this sentiment often degenerates into a narrow, partial, exclusive attachment, alienating us from other branches of the human family, and instigating to aggression on other states. In ancient times, this principle was developed with wonderful energy, and sometimes absorbed every other sentiment. To the Roman, Rome was the universe. Other nations were of no value but to grace her triumphs, and illustrate her power; and he, who in private life would have disdained injustice and oppression, exulted in the success

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ful violence, by which other nations were bound to the chariot wheels of this mistress of the world. This spirit still exists. The tie of country is thought to absolve men from the obligations of universal justice and humanity. Statesmen and rulers are expected to build up their own country at the expense of others; and in the false patriotism of the citizen, they have a security for any outrages, which are sanctioned by success.

Let me mention one other spring of war.—I mean the impressions we receive in early life. In our early years, we know war only as it offers itself to us at a review; not arrayed in horror, not scattering wo, not stalking over fields of the slain and desolated regions, its eye flashing with fury, and its sword reeking with blood—No. War, as we first see it, is decked with gay and splendid trappings, and wears a countenance of joy. It moves with a measured and graceful step, to the sound of the heart-stirring fife and drum. Its instruments of death wound only the air. Such is war; the youthful eye is dazzled with its ornaments; the youthful heart dances to its animated sounds. It seems a pastime full of spirit and activity, the very sport in which youth delights. These false views of war are confirmed by our earliest reading. We are intoxicated with the exploits of the conqueror, as recorded in real history or in glowing fiction. We follow, with a sympathick ardour, his rapid and triumphant career in battle;

and, unused as we are to suffering and death, forget the fallen and miserable who are crushed under his victorious car. Particularly by the study of the ancient poets and historians the sentiments of early and barbarous ages on the subject of war are kept alive in the mind. The trumpet, which roused the fury of Achilles and of the hordes of Greece, still resounds in our ears; and though christians by profession, some of our earliest and deepest impressions are received in the school of uncivilized antiquity. Even where these impressions in favour of war are not received in youth, we yet learn from our early familiarity with it, to consider it as a necessary evil, an essential part of our condition. We become reconciled to it as to a fixed law of our nature; and consider the thought of its abolition as extravagant as an attempt to chain the winds or arrest the lightning.

I have thus attempted to unfold the principal causes of war. They are, you perceive, of a moral nature. They may be resolved into wrong views of human glory, and into excesses of certain passions and desires, which by right direction, would promote the best interests of humanity. From these causes we learn, that this savage custom is to be repressed by *moral means*, by salutary influences on the sentiments and principles of mankind. To Christian ministers then the work of suppressing war peculiarly belongs.

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By these remarks, we are naturally led to consider the *remedies* of war, or the methods of its abolition; and here, in introducing the observations which I have to offer on this branch of the subject, I feel myself bound to suggest an important caution. Let not the cause of peace be injured by the assertion of extreme and indefensible principles. I particularly refer to the principle, that war is absolutely, and in all possible cases unlawful, and prohibited by Christianity. This doctrine is considered by a great majority of the judicious and enlightened, as endangering the best interests of society; and it ought not therefore to be connected with our efforts for the diffusion of peace, unless it appear to us a clear and indubitable truth. War, as it is commonly waged, is indeed a tremendous evil; but national subjugation is a greater evil than a war of defence; and a community seems to me to possess an indisputable right to resort to such a war, when all other means have failed for the security of its existence or freedom. It is universally admitted, that a community may employ force to repress the rapacity and violence of its own citizens, to disarm and restrain its internal foes; and on what ground can we deny to it the right of repelling the inroads and aggressions of a foreign power? If a government may not lawfully resist a foreign army, invading its territory to desolate and subdue, on what principles can we justify a resistance of

a combination of its own citizens for the same injurious purpose. Government is instituted for the very purpose of protecting the community from all violence, no matter by what hands it may be offered; and rulers would be unfaithful to their trust, were they to abandon the rights, interests, and improvements of society to unprincipled rapacity, whether of domestick or foreign foes.

We are indeed told, that the language of scripture is, "resist not evil." But the scriptures are given to us as reasonable beings. We must remember, that to the renunciation of *réason* in the interpretation of scripture, we owe those absurdities, which have sunk Christianity almost to the level of heathenism. If the precept to "resist not evil" admit no exception, then civil government is prostrated; then the magistrate must, in no case, resist the injurious; then the subject must, in no case, employ the aid of the laws to enforce his rights. The very end and office of government is, to *resist* evil men. For this, the civil magistrate bears the sword; and he should beware of interpretations of the scriptures, which would lead him to bear it in vain.

The doctrine of the absolute unlawfulness of war is thought by its advocates to be necessary to a successful opposition to this barbarous custom. But, were we employed to restore peace to a contentious neighbourhood, we should not consider ourselves as obliged to teach, that self-defence is in every possible

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case a crime; and equally useless is this principle in our labours for the pacification of the world. Without taking this uncertain and dangerous ground, we may, and ought to assail war, by assailing the principles and passions which give it birth, and by improving and exalting the moral sentiments of mankind.

For example; important service may be rendered to the cause of peace, by communicating and enforcing just and elevated sentiments in relation to the true honour of rulers. Let us teach, that the prosperity, and not the extent of a state, is the measure of a ruler's glory; that the brute force and crooked policy which annex a conquest, are infinitely inferior to the wisdom, justice, and beneficence which make a country happy; and that the earth holds not a more abandoned monster, than the sovereign, who, entrusted with the dearest interests of a people, commits them to the dreadful hazards of war, that he may extend his prostituted power, and fill the earth with his worthless name. Let us exhibit to the honour and veneration of mankind the character of the Christian Ruler, who, disdaining the cheap and vulgar honour of a conqueror, aspires to a new and more enduring glory; who, casting away the long tried weapons of intrigue and violence, adheres with a holy and unshaken confidence to justice and philanthropy, as a nation's best defence; and who considers himself as exalted by God, only that he may shed down blessings, and be as a beneficent deity to the world.

To these instructions in relation to the true glory of rulers, should be added just sentiments as to the glory of nations. Let us teach, that the honour of a nation consists, not in the forced and reluctant submission of other states, but in equal laws and free institutions, in cultivated fields and prosperous cities, in the development of intellectual and moral power, in the diffusion of knowledge, in magnanimity and justice, in the virtues and blessings of peace. Let us never be weary in reprobating that infernal spirit of conquest, by which a nation becomes the terror and abhorrence of the world, and inevitably prepares a tomb, at best a splendid tomb, for its own liberties and prosperity. Nothing has been more common, than for nations to imagine themselves great and glorious on the ground of foreign conquest, when at home they have been loaded with chains, and forced to lick with the tongue of flattery, the hand of a despot. Cannot these gross and monstrous delusions be scattered? Can nothing be done to persuade christian nations to engage in a new and untried race of glory, in generous competitions, in a noble contest for superiority in wise legislation and internal improvements, in the spirit of liberty and humanity?

Another most important method of promoting the cause of peace is, to turn men's admiration from military courage to qualities of real nobleness and dignity. It is time that the childish admiration of courage should give

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place to more manly sentiments; and in proportion as we effect this change, we shall shake the main pillar of war; we shall rob military life of its chief attraction.—Courage is a very doubtful quality, springing from very different sources, and possessing a corresponding variety of character. Courage sometimes results from mental weakness. Peril is confronted, because the mind wants comprehension to discern its extent. This is often the courage of youth, the courage of unreflecting ignorance, a contempt of peril because peril is but dimly seen.—Courage still more frequently springs from physical temperament, from a rigid fibre and iron nerves, and deserves as little praise, as the proportion of the form, or the beauty of the countenance.—Again, every passion, which is strong enough to overcome the passion of fear, and to exclude by its vehemence the idea of danger, communicates at least a temporary courage. Thus revenge, when it burns with great fury, gives a terrible energy to the mind, and has sometimes impelled men to meet certain death, that they might inflict the same fate on an enemy. You see the doubtful nature of courage. It is often associated with the worst vices. The most wonderful examples of it may be found in the history of pirates and robbers, whose fearlessness is generally proportioned to the insensibility of their consciences, and to the enormity of their crimes. Courage is also exhibited with astonishing power in barbarous countries, where the child is trained to despise



the hardships and pains to which he is exposed by his condition; where the absence of civil laws obliges every man to be his own defender; and where, from the imperfection of moral sentiment, corporeal strength and ferocious courage are counted the noblest qualities of human nature. The common courage of armies is equally worthless with that of the pirate and the savage. A considerable part of almost every army, so far from deriving their resolution from love of country and a sense of justice, can hardly be said to have a country, and have been driven into the ranks by necessities, which were generated by vice. These are the *brave soldiers*, whose praises we hear; brave from the absence of all reflection; prodigal of life, because their vices have robbed life of its blessings; brave from sympathy; brave from the thirst of plunder; and especially brave, because the sword of martial law is hanging over their heads. Accordingly, military courage is easily attained by the most debased and unprincipled men. The common drunkard of the streets, who is enlisted in a fit of intoxication, when thrown into the ranks among the unthinking and profane, subjected to the rigour of martial discipline, familiarized by exposure to the idea of danger, and menaced with death if he betray a symptom of fear, becomes as brave as his officer, whose courage may often be traced to the same dread of punishment, and to fear of severer infamy, than attends on the cowardice of the common soldier. Let the

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tribute of honour be freely and liberally given to the *soldier of principle*, who exposes his life for a cause which his conscience approves, and who mingles clemency and mercy with the joy of triumph. But as for the multitudes of military men, who regard war as a trade by which to thrive, who hire themselves to fight and slay in any cause, and who destroy their fellow beings with as little concern, as the husbandman does the vermin that infest his fields, I know no class of men on whom admiration can more unjustly and more injuriously be bestowed. Let us labour, my brethren, to direct the admiration and love of mankind to another and infinitely higher kind of greatness, to that true magnanimity, which is prodigal of ease and life in the service of God and mankind, and which proves its courage by unshaken adherence, amidst scorn and danger, to truth and virtue. Let the records of past ages be explored, to rescue from oblivion, not the wasteful conqueror, whose path was as the whirlwind, but the benefactors of the human race, martyrs to the interests of freedom and religion, men who have broken the chain of the slave, who have traversed the earth to shed consolation into the cell of the prisoner, or whose sublime faculties have explored and revealed useful and ennobling truths. Can nothing be done to hasten the time, when to such men eloquence and poetry shall offer their glowing homage? when for these the statue and monument shall be erected, the canvass be animated, and the

laurel entwined? and when to these the admiration of the young shall be directed, as their guides and fore-runners to glory and immortality?

I proceed to another method of promoting the cause of peace. Let Christian ministers exhibit with greater clearness and distinctness, than ever they have done, the pacifick and benevolent spirit of Christianity. My brethren, this spirit ought to hold the same place in our preaching, which it holds in the gospel of our Lord. Instead of being crowded and lost among other subjects, it should stand in the front of Christian graces; it should be inculcated as the life and essence of our religion. We should teach men, that charity is greater than faith and hope; that God is love or benevolence; and that love is the brightest communication of divinity to the human soul. We should exhibit Jesus in all the amiableness of his character, now shedding tears over Jerusalem, and now, his blood on Calvary, and in his last hours recommending his own sublime love as the badge and distinction of his followers. We should teach men, that it is the property of the benevolence of Christianity, to diffuse itself like the light and rain of heaven, to disdain the limits of rivers, mountains, or oceans, by which nations are divided, and to embrace every human being as a brother. Let us never forget, that our preaching is evangelical, just in proportion as it inculcates and awakens this disinterested and unbounded charity; and that our hearers

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are Christians, just as far and no farther, than they delight in peace and beneficence.

It is a painful truth, which ought not to be suppressed, that the pacifick influence of the gospel has been greatly obstructed by the disposition, which has prevailed in all ages, and especially among Christian ministers, to give importance to the peculiarities of sects, and to rear walls of partition between different denominations. Shame ought to cover the face of the believer, when he remembers, that under no religion have intolerance and persecution raged more fiercely, than under the gospel of the meek and forbearing Saviour. Christians have made the earth to reek with blood and to resound with denunciation. Can we wonder, that, while the spirit of war has been cherished in the very bosom of the church, it has continued to ravage among the nations. My brethren, let not the delusions of the dark ages be perpetual. Let us remember, that Christianity is a spirit, rather than a doctrine, and that this spirit is universal love; and in our preaching, and in our lives, let us bear perpetual testimony to this great characteristick of the gospel. It is believed, that were the true spirit of Christianity to be inculcated with but half the zeal, which has been wasted on doubtful and disputed doctrines, a sympathy, a cooperation might in a very short time be produced among Christians of every nation, most propitious to the pacification of the world. In consequence of the progress of knowledge and the exten-

sion of commerce, Christians of both hemispheres are at this moment brought nearer to one another, than at any former period; and an intercourse, founded on religious sympathies, is gradually connecting the most distant regions. Christians of different tongues are beginning to unite their efforts in support of that cause, which, by its sublimity and purity obscures, and almost annihilates those perishable interests, about which states are divided. What a powerful weapon is furnished by this new bond of union to the ministers and friends of peace! Should not the auspicious moment be seized to inculcate on all Christians in all regions, that they owe their first allegiance to their common Lord in heaven, whose first, and last, and great command is—love? Should they not be taught to look with a shuddering abhorrence on war, which continually summons to the field of battle, under opposing standards, the followers of the same Saviour, and commands them to imbrue their hands in each others blood? Has not the time arrived, when the dreadful insensibility of Christians on this subject may be removed; when the repugnance of the gospel to this inhuman custom may be carried with power to every pious heart; and when all who love the Lord Jesus, the prince of peace, may be brought to feel, and with one solemn voice to pronounce, that of all men *he* is most stained with murder, and most obnoxious to the wrath of God, who, entrusted with power to bless, becomes the

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scourge, and curse, and ravager of the creation; scatters slaughter, famine, devastation, and bereavement through the earth; arms man against his brother; multiplies widows and fatherless children; and sends thousands of unprepared souls to be his accusers at the judgment seat of God?—Once let Christians of every nation be brought to espouse the cause of peace with one heart and one voice, and their labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Human affairs will rapidly assume a new and milder aspect. The predicted ages of peace will dawn on the world. Publick opinion will be purified. The false lustre of the hero will grow dim; a nobler order of character will be admired and diffused; the kingdoms of the world will gradually become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.

I might easily extend this head by the suggestion of other methods, by which ministers should resist the causes of war. But I will only add; let this subject recur more frequently in our preaching. Let us exhibit to the hearts and consciences of men the woes and guilt of war, with all the energy of deep conviction and strong emotion. Let us labour to associate images of horror and infamy with this unchristian custom in the minds of the young; and awaken, at once, their sympathy towards its victims, and their indignation against its imposing and dazzling crimes. To men of a venturesome and daring minds; who thirst for achievements which bear the stamp



of greatness, let us point out services to humanity and religion which demand the most powerful energies of our nature. Let us teach and show, that war is not necessary as a field for greatness and glory, but that peace and philanthropy give scope to generous enterprize, and furnish objects commensurate with the noblest impulses and boldest aspirings of the heart.

My friends, I did intend, but I have not time, to notice the arguments which are urged in support of war. Let me only say, that the common argument, that war is necessary to awaken the boldness, energy, and noblest qualities of human nature, will, I hope, receive a practical refutation in the friends of philanthropy and peace. Let it appear in your lives, that you need not this spark from hell to kindle an heroick resolution in your breasts. Let it appear, that a pacifick spirit has no affinity with a tame and feeble character. Let us prove, that courage, the virtue which has been thought to flourish most in the rough field of war, may be reared to a more generous height, and to a firmer texture, in the bosom of peace. Let it be seen, that it is not fear, but principle, which has made us the enemies of war. In every enterprise of philanthropy which demands daring, and sacrifice, and exposure to hardship and toil, let us embark with serenity and joy. Be it our part, to exhibit an undaunted, unshaken, unwearied resolution, not in spreading ruin, but in serving God and mankind, in alleviating human misery, in diffusing

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truth and virtue, and especially in opposing war. The doctrines of Christianity have had many martyrs. Let us be willing, if God shall require it, to be martyrs to its spirit—the neglected, insulted spirit of peace and love. In a better service we cannot live—in a nobler cause we cannot die. It is the cause of Jesus Christ, supported by almighty goodness, and appointed to triumph over the passions and delusions of men, the customs of ages, and the fallen monuments of the forgotten conqueror.

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## NOTE.

I HAVE deferred to this place a few remarks on the arguments which are usually adduced in support of war.

War, it is said, kindles patriotism; by fighting for our country, we learn to love it—But the patriotism, which is cherished by war, is ordinarily false and spurious, a vice and not a virtue, a scourge to the world, a narrow, unjust passion, which aims to exalt a particular state on the humiliation and destruction of other nations. A genuine, enlightened patriot discerns, that the welfare of his own country is involved in the general progress of society; and, in the character of a patriot as well as of a Christian, he rejoices in the liberty and prosperity of other communities, and is anxious to maintain with them the relations of peace and amity.

It is said, that a military spirit is the defence of a country. But it more frequently endangers the vital interests of a nation, by embroiling it with other states. This spirit, like every other passion, is impatient for gratification, and often precipitates a country into unnecessary war. A people have no need of a military spirit. Let them be attached to their government and institutions by habit, by early associations, and especially by experimental conviction of their excellence, and they will never want means or spirit to defend them.

War is recommended as a method of redressing national grievances. But unhappily, the weapons of war, from their very nature, are often wielded most successfully by the unprincipled. Justice and force have little congeniality. Should not Christians every where strive to promote the reference of national as well as of individual disputes to an impartial umpire? Is a project of this nature more extravagant than the idea of reducing savage hordes to a state of regular society? The last has been accomplished. Is the first to be abandoned in despair?

It is said, that war sweeps off the idle, dissolute, and vicious members of the community. Monstrous argument! If a government may for this end plunge a nation into war, it may with equal justice consign to the executioner any number of its subjects, whom it may deem a burden on the state. The fact is, that war commonly generates as many profligates as it destroys. A disbanded army fills the community with at least as many abandoned members as at first it absorbed.—There is another method, not quite so summary as war, of ridding a country of unprofitable and injurious citizens, but vastly more effectual; and a method, which will be applied with spirit and success, just in proportion as war shall yield to the light and spirit of Christianity. I refer to the exertions, which Christians have commenced, for the reformation and improvement of the ignorant and poor, and especially for the instruction and moral culture of indigent children. Christians are entreated to persevere and abound in these godlike efforts. By diffusing moral and religious principles and sober and industrious habits through the labouring classes of society, they will dry up one important source of war. They will destroy in a considerable degree the materials of armies. In proportion as these classes become well-principled and industrious, poverty will disappear; the population of a country will be more and more proportioned to its resources; and of course the number will be diminished of those, who have no alternative but beggary or a camp. The moral care, which is at the present day extended to the poor, is one of the most honourable features of our age. Christians! remember, that *your* proper warfare is with ignorance and vice, and exhibit here the same unwearied and inventive energy, which has marked the warriors of the world.

It is sometimes said, that a military spirit favours liberty. But how is it, that nations, after fighting for ages, are so generally enslaved. The truth is, that liberty has no foundation but in private and publick virtue; and virtue, as we have seen, is not the common growth of war.

But the great argument remains to be discussed. It is said, that without war to excite and invigorate the human mind, some of its noblest energies will slumber,

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and its highest qualities, courage, magnanimity, fortitude, will perish.—To this I answer, that if war is to be encouraged among nations, because it nourishes energy and heroism, on the same principle, war in our families, and war between neighbourhoods, villages, and cities ought to be encouraged; for such contests would equally tend to promote heroick daring and contempt of death. Why shall not different provinces of the same empire annually meet with the weapons of death, to keep alive their courage? We shrink at this suggestion with horror; but why shall contests of nations, rather than of provinces or families, find shelter under this barbarous argument?

I observe again; if war be a blessing, because it awakens energy and courage, then the savage state is peculiarly privileged; for every savage is a soldier, and his whole modes of life tend to form him to invincible resolution. On the same principle, those early periods of society were happy, when men were called to contend, not only with one another, but with beasts of prey; for to these excitements we owe the heroism of Hercules and Theseus. On the same principle, the feudal ages were more favoured than the present; for then every baron was a military chief, every castle frowned defiance, and every vassal was trained to arms—And do we really wish, that the earth should again be overrun with monsters, or abandoned to savage or feudal violence, in order that heroes may be multiplied? If not, let us cease to vindicate war as affording excitement to energy and courage.

I repeat, what I have observed in the preceding discourse; we need not war to awaken human energy. There is at least equal scope for courage and magnanimity in blessing as in destroying mankind. The condition of the human race offers inexhaustible objects for enterprize, and fortitude, and magnanimity. In relieving the countless wants and sorrows of the world, in exploring unknown regions, in carrying the arts and virtues of civilization to unimproved communities, in extending the bounds of knowledge, in diffusing the spirit of freedom, and especially in spreading the light and influence of Christianity, how much may be dared, how much endured? Philanthropy invites us to services, which



demand the most intense, and elevated, and resolute, and adventurous activity. Let it not be imagined, that were nations imbued with the spirit of Christianity, they would slumber in ignoble ease, that instead of the high minded murderers, who are formed on the present system of war, we should have effeminate and timid slaves. Christian benevolence is as active as it is forbearing. Let it once form the character of a people, and it will attach them to every important interest of society. It will call forth sympathy in behalf of the suffering in every region under heaven. It will give a new extension to the heart, open a wider sphere to enterprize, inspire a courage of exhaustless resource, and prompt to every sacrifice and exposure for the improvement and happiness of the human race. The energy of this principle has been tried and displayed in the fortitude of the martyr, and in the patient labours of those who have carried the gospel into the dreary abodes of idolatry. Away then with the argument, that war is needed as a nursery of heroism. The school of the peaceful Redeemer is infinitely more adapted to teach the nobler, as well as the milder virtues, which adorn humanity.

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